120.

A FUNERAL SERMON,

By the Rev. T. PENROSE,

Curate of *NEWBURY*.

FUNERAL SERMON

PHILLIPS MUSEUM

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The Righteous bleſſed in Death.

A

SERMON

Preached in the Pariſh Church of

NEWBURY, BERKS,

Jan. 14*th*, 1774,

At the FUNERAL of the

Rev. JOHN GEREE, LLB,

FELLOW of WINCHESTER.

BY THE

Rev. THOMAS PENROSE, Curate of *Newbury*.

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MDCCLXXIV.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

SERMON.

REV. xiv. 13.

I HEARD A VOICE FROM HEAVEN SAYING UNTO ME, WRITE, BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD.

SO mournful is the Occaſion of this preſent Aſſembly, and ſo ſolemn is the Office in which I am now engaged; that I hope you will be all deeply affected with the moſt ſerious Impreſſions. The Sight of a Friend addreſſing you over the Remains of a beloved Friend is a Circumſtance that may perhaps awaken your Attention.---God grant that my well-

meant Endeavours may rouſe you from the Dream of thoughtleſs Security! and may call you forth to the Exertion of your utmoſt Diligence while the Day of Life is yet at hand; before the laſt ſad Night cometh, in which no Man can work. For how fondly ſo ever you may flatter yourſelves, or how firmly ſo ever you may rely on your preſent Health; yet it is my Duty repeatedly to urge this alarming but neglected Truth, that *Your Life is a Vapour and nothing more.*---Dependence upon Youth and Strength is the greateſt of all Infatuations; the Evening Meteor is not more fleeting; the ſwelling Billow is not more unſtable. Lay this important Leſſon therefore to your Hearts, that as it is certainly *appointed unto all Men once to die,* ſo not one of us under this Sentence of Mortality can form the leaſt Judgment when the deciſive Period will arrive; not one of us can *tell the Day nor the Hour of our Maſter's Coming.*---Lay this Leſſon to your Hearts; and let the Time, moſt graciouſly continued to you here on Earth, be employed in Preparation for this awful Change.

Bleſſed,

Bleſſed, ſays the Text, *are the Dead that die in the Lord.* Be it then the Prayer of each of you for himſelf, *let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my laſt End be like his!*

And here it is proper to obſerve that the *Death of the Righteous* doth not mean any particular Mode or Manner of dying as to external Circumſtances and viſible Symptoms. Becauſe the Bodies of the *Righteous* are ſubject to Diſeaſes, to Pains, to Infirmities, like the Bodies of other Men:---They grow old and decay under the ſame Diſtempers; and they wear the ſame pale Aſpect when dying and when dead.

But tho' the Difference is imperceptible in their corporeal Senſations and their outward Form; yet it is very great and very viſible in the Affections of their Minds. For the Righteous are then free from Diſquietude, when the Wicked are trembling with Fear. The Righteous are then calm and ſerene, when the *Wicked are like the troubled Sea which cannot reſt.*

The

The Righteous are then animated with Hope, when the Wicked are fainting with Deſpair.

Death indeed, it muſt be allowed, is moſt awful and ſolemn in every View: The Mind contemplates Death as the Period of all Certainty; for we know not what Scenes will be opened, when the bodily Eyes are cloſed:---we know not what will ſucceed upon our Departure out of this State of Being:----We know not to what Region the Soul muſt paſs upon its Separation from Matter; nor what Place nor what Kind of Exiſtence is allotted for it. Live we ſhall:---For Nature as well as Religion tells us, "that we ſhall live,"---but how, or where, that is the Myſtery.

God Almighty hath not been pleaſed to permit any Intercourſe to be opened between the World of Spirits and the World of Fleſh. No one ever yet returned from the inviſible Manſions; nor have we any Intelligence from that Place of final Allotment, to which the unembodied Souls of Men are conveyed.

No

No wonder then, that the Approach of Death ſhould impreſs us with Serioufneſs; that every Man ſhould feel great Concern at the concluding Hour; and ſhould be anxious about what is to follow. Eſpecially as we are told both by the Voice of Conſcience and by the Voice of God, that there is to be a Judgment—an awful Judgment—at which all muſt appear before an omnipotent Being, who knoweth every Secret of our Hearts;—and who will pronounce an irrevocable Sentence either of everlaſting Happineſs or Miſery upon us.

But while the Wicked tremble with Aſtoniſhment in their laſt Moments, and the Apprehenſions of Nature are heightened by the Stings of Conſcience;—while they behold with Horror the concluding Scene,—the Day of Life juſt cloſing,—their Repentance unfiniſhed,—the Vengeance of God unappeaſed;—and would fain draw back from the diſmal Proſpect: The Righteous, on

the contrary, are fortified with Armour of ſovereign Virtue; in them the Weakneſs of Nature is aſſiſted by the Conſolations of Hope, and ſtrengthened by the Shield of Faith.

The Righteous conſider Death as the Commencement of Eternity,—of an Eternity of Happineſs; and they are firmly perſuaded, that they ſhall live in a joyful Felicity, when the Sun ſhall be turned into Darkneſs; and when all the Stars that move around him ſhall be no more.

They look with Awe indeed at the End of Life; and ſome ſolemn Thoughts will ariſe in the beſt of Men, when the Soul is juſt going to take it's Flight into a World unknown. But they conſider, at the ſame Time, that they cannot enter into the Glories of Heaven, 'till they have put off the Incumbrance of the

Earth;

Earth; for the Apoſtle ſaith, that *Fleſh and Blood*, ſuch as it is at preſent, *cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.*

And as to the intermediate State between Death and the Reſurrection; wherever and whatever it be; they truſt in the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, that it will be a State of Reſt and Peace. They perplex not themſelves with dark Conjecture; but firmly believing that God is *able to keep that which they have committed unto him againſt that Day*, they reſign their Souls *into the Hands of their faithful Creator* with the Words of the dying Martyr, *Lord Jeſus! receive my Spirit:* And thus they like the righteous *Stephen, fall aſleep.*

The Wicked ſee God under the Idea of an incenſed Judge; and they dread to *die*, becauſe their Conſcience tells them they

muſt

muſt *riſe again*; and the Scripture adds, that they muſt come forth *to the Reſurrection of Condemnation.*

But *thoſe who die in the Lord* are *bleſſed* with a moſt refeſhing *Hope in their Death.* For they look forwards to the Admiſſion into the Preſence of their Maker with an inward Joy. They have conſtantly laboured to be obedient to the Law; and therefore they dread no Puniſhment. They are conſcious that they have *fought a good Fight, that they have finiſhed their Courſe, that they have kept the Faith*; and therefore they comfort themſelves, that for *them is laid up the Crown of everlaſting Life, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, ſhall give them at that Day.*

Every Thing that can chear and conſole the Mind, adminiſters to their Satisfaction;---ſuch as Peace with God and Man,

---Peace

---Peace of Heart,-- and a bleſſed Immortality in View. Hope gives Wings to their Devotion; and the *precious Promiſes* of a merciful God ſupport their Souls. They know that they are to appear at a moſt awful Judgment; yet they are but little diſmayed; for they truſt that their compaſſionate Saviour will accept their Services, and will recompence their Obedience with a Crown of Glory. In this Perſuaſion they have lived, with this Expectation they die. They die,---not as the Wicked, with a diſtracted haunted Mind; but with a pious Reſignation, and a bleſſed Aſſurance.

Think not that this Confidence is the Effect of Enthuſiaſm: it is the Privilege of conſcious VIRTUE and true RELIGION; and is grounded on the plaineſt Declarations of the holy Scriptures. For theſe repeatedly ſet forth the Glory and Happineſs that are prepared for the Righteous; and in almoſt innumerable

Inſtances proclaim how tranſcendently *bleſſed the Dead are which die in the Lord.*

Let this Conſideration therefore awaken your Attention: Let this call forth all your Diligence before it is too late. Think what a Treaſure is to be found in Virtue and Piety at the Hour of Death!---Think how ſweet is then the Remembrance of a good Life and Converſation! Think how happy is the Man who can then ſay to himſelf, *I have lived in all good Conſcience before God, until this Day!*

May theſe Reflections ſink deep into your Hearts! they are ſuch as ought to have great Weight at a Solemnity like this; they are ſuch as our departed BROTHER wiſhed you ſhould feel at his Grave. But I muſt remind you that how eager ſo ever you may be to obtain this glorious Felicity, yet you never can arrive at

it but by a ſteady Perſeverance in the Practice of Holineſs. This is the great Point on which all will turn, and before you can partake of the *Bleſſings* aſſured to thoſe *who DIE in the Lord*, it is eſſentially neceſſary that you ſhould firſt imitate their *LIFE*. You muſt be what the Righteous are in Uprightneſs and Purity of Manners; you muſt copy their good Examples; and then you will be filled with the ſame Hope, you will experience the ſame Tranquillity, you will meet Death with the ſame Compoſure, and you will deſcend into the Grave with the ſame Expectation of a joyful Recompence.

To try any other Expedient, or to depend on any other Means, will be a vain Attempt, and a very dangerous Confidence. If any Man ſhould *truſt in the Multitude of his Riches*; and ſhould fancy that Honours and Titles will procure him an eaſy

Death

Death, and a quiet and ſafe Paſſage to Bliſs eternal: Alas! how ſoon and how ſadly will he be convinced of the Contrary! For on a Death-bed all earthly Diſtinctions diſappear; and in the Grave we are all upon a Level.

What is it then that makes the Difference? It is the Conſciouſneſs of Virtue; and the Reflection upon a well-ſpent Life. This is the Pillar upon which you may lean with Safety: This is a Foundation that will never fail. But on the contrary, if in this ſolemn Hour of Trial you want Goodneſs, *you want the one Thing needful:* without which all the reſt will *avail you nothing.* If you cannot then look back upon a Series of virtuous Actions; it will be but to little Purpoſe to look back upon any Thing elſe. If you cannot then appeal to the *Teſtimony of your Conſcience;* it will be in vain to call in any other Evidence. For if you ſpend your Time in Vice and Iniquity; how can you expect that your End ſhall be happy?—If you *live* like the

Wicked,

Wicked, how can you hope to be *bleſſed like thoſe who die in the Lord?*

Begin then, from this Inſtant, to employ yourſelves in the Duties which God hath commanded:—Be religious, ſober, honeſt, and benevolent, and all will be well: The Evening of ſuch a Day will be cloudleſs and ſerene; the End of ſuch a Life will be *a Hope full of Immortality.* And the pooreſt of Men, who hath Innocence for his Comfort, and Goodneſs of Heart for his Support, will be happier in his laſt Hours than the greateſt Monarch who is ſelf condemned.

And here, in Juſtice to the Merits of our departed BROTHER, I cannot paſs by this ſolemn Opportunity of recommending his fair Example to your Imitation.—I am far from holding it as an

Opinion, that a Funeral Oration ſhould be laviſhed away in a Panegyrick upon the DEAD : The awful Circumſtances attending ſuch an Addreſs, ſhould be carefully improved to the Inſtruction of the LIVING: But in the Inſtance before us Silence would be a Crime.---The Virtues that adorned our late Brother's Life, were too uſeful to be permitted to ſlumber in Oblivion: during his Continuance among us they were the Objects of your Eſteem; they muſt now excite your Veneration; for the *Memory of the Juſt ſhall be bleſſed.*

Turn then to his amiable Character, and reverence in him the united Merits of the SON, the SCHOLAR, and the FRIEND.---Under the Patronage of a diſcerning Eye, he was introduced early into a Society, the Reputation of which requires no Encomium from ſuch Lips as mine: And here his Attention and Aſſiduity recommended him ſo much to the affectionate

Notice

Notice of his Superiors, that they, to the Honour of their Judgment and Integrity, preferred him to a more diſtinguiſhed and elevated Station. This Favour he received with humble Thankſgiving to God for inſpiring the benevolent WYKEHAM with ſuch pious Munificence; and in grateful Acceptance of his Founder's Bounty, he beſtowed it to the beſt of all Purpoſes, that of cheriſhing a beloved Parent: The providing for her Houſhold was next to his Soul's Concern his greateſt Care; and his dying Prayers were put up to God, that ſome Comforter might ariſe to dry up her Tears, when his moſt affectionate Endeavours for her Welfare ſhould be extinguiſhed in Death.

As to his Learning; his great Modeſty prevented him from making any oſtentatious Diſplay of it; but to thoſe who were admitted to his uſeful and inſtructive Converſation I appeal to confirm this Truth, that his Mind was ſtored with much elegant

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and valuable Information---In his Clerical Character he was truly Praiſe-worthy: He laboured with a moſt ſcrupulous Perſeverance to amend and improve his Hearers by plain practical Doctrine; not to perplex and confound them by vain Attempts to clear up inexplicable Myſteries. His Benevolence to Chriſtians of every Denomination was extenſively noble, for he was HIMSELF a CHRISTIAN. In Matters therefore of Opinion and Speculation he always refuſed to interfere; For he was ſenſible that, as we are all mortal Men, ſo not one more than another of us can have any Pretenſions to Infallibility.

(Happy would it be if this mild tolerating Spirit prevailed more among Men of our Order! Happy would it be, if inſtead of perſecuting each other about Modes and Forms, and idle Ceremonies, we would ſtudy mutual Charity, that Eſſence of

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our MERCIFUL Saviour's Religion; and would all meet in the Houſe of *God as Friends!)*

In the Diſcharge of the ſocial Duties, our Brother may well be propoſed as a Pattern to all.--Equally cautious how he offended, as ready to forgive, he made the Happineſs of his Connexions a moſt particular Study. He was ever remarked to be the Advocate of injured Innocence, the Defender of the abſent;—The Story of Slander and Defamation gained no Increaſe from him; on the contrary it was always his Endeavour to check any malevolent Rumour, and to expoſe and hold out to Abhorrence the Authors and Propagators of the invidious Tale. Much good-Will was ſhewn by him to all Mankind;---he conſidered every one as bound to him by the common Tie of Relationſhip, and it was his unvaried Study faithfully to render to all their Due.

Such was our departed Friend, (for Friend we may juſtly call him, as he deſerved to have no Enemies:) ſuch he was, valuable in every Point of View; improving in his Converſation; aſſiſting with his Counſel; inſtructive in his Example; pious, benevolent, and virtuous in his Life; and in conſequence thereof *bleſſed* with truly Chriſtian Reſignation, and with the Comforts of *holy Hope* in his Death.

May WE, the Survivors, treaſure up in our Breaſts the fair Remembrance! May we, in Imitation of our Brother's Circumſpection, ſtudy to avoid all ſuch Courſes, and ſuch Practices, as will diſturb our Souls in the laſt trying Hour; and will make the Terrors of Death more terrible. May WE, who have been hitherto negligent, begin from this Inſtant, and perſevere in the Way of Righteouſneſs; and then the End will be happy! May

we

we moſt induſtriouſly *follow that which is good;* and then our Days will proceed with Tranquillity and cloſe in Comfort: No Clouds of Sorrow will hang lowring around our laſt Scene; no dreadful Gloom will darken our Proſpect or extinguiſh our Hope.

And, O! Let this be the warmeſt, the moſt intereſting Deſire of our Hearts; for this let us pray with unabating Zeal: And at the ſame Time in pious Memory of our late Brother, and of all others who *have died in the Lord, Let us bleſs God's holy Name for all his Servants departed this Life in his Faith and Fear; beſeeching him to give us Grace ſo to follow their good Examples, that with them we may be Partakers of his heavenly Kingdom.*

F I N I S.

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